

August 7, 2007
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker, Vice Chairman Rick Harris, and Billy Kimbrough. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Harris moved approval of the minutes from the June 5, 2007 meeting; Kimbrough seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Garcon Point Courtesy Dock

Whitfield said the courtesy dock at Garcon Point Boat Ramp recommended by the Marine Advisory Committee has been approved by the Board of County Commissioners. He said staff felt alterations need to be made to the north dock because of a 15 foot setback requirement on the north side of the boat ramp.

Stacy Bryan said he is opposed to the proposed north courtesy dock at the Garcon Point Boat Ramp. He submitted pictures to the committee. Bryan said his property is adjacent to the Garcon Point Boat Ramp. He said he is concerned with the north dock being 30 feet from his property line. Bryan said he currently has problems with trespassers on his property from this boat ramp, and he felt this new dock will make the problem worse. He asked the committee to leave off the proposed north dock and extend the south dock.

Harris asked if Bryan is agreeable to a 12 foot dock on the north side of the ramp. Bryan said a 12 foot dock is better for him. Harris said the main problem with this boat ramp is boats bang up against the concrete on windy days. He said he felt docks at Garcon Point Boat Ramp will prevent boats from being damaged and any trespassing on Bryan's property will be minimized by limiting the north dock to 12 feet.

Bryan said the seawall at Garcon Point Boat Ramp needs to be repaired before a dock is built. He said the seawall is damaged and is leaning. Whitfield said the dock will not extend to the damaged portion of the seawall. He said the seawall can be fixed at a later date. Harris said he would like the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) to place a jetty at the Garcon Point Boat Ramp.

Bryan said another problem with the Garcon Point Boat Ramp is the hours of operation. He said people stay at the boat ramp area and are very noisy during all hours of the day. Bryan said he would like the sign at the park changed to "Open 24 hours to boaters." He asked the committee to limit the north dock to a maximum of 15 feet. Harris said any type of dock at this boat ramp will be an improvement.

Marker asked if people are pulling Bryan's fence down. Bryan said people are popping boards off by running their boats into his fence. He said people are also tying their boats to his fence. There was discussion on the size dock needed at the Garcon Point Boat Ramp.

Harris said he felt the majority of docking can be placed on the south side of the boat ramp, and a smaller portion can be placed on the north side of the boat ramp. Marker said he felt a 12 foot dock on the north side of the ramp will suffice. Harris said he felt the north side of the ramp only needs to be big enough for one boat. Whitfield said it might be possible to build a 40 foot dock on the south side of the ramp and a 12 foot dock on the north side of the ramp. He said permits will have to be changed if the committee requests a dock longer than 40 feet in length on either side of the boat ramp. Whitfield said he recommends placing a 40 foot dock on the south side of the ramp and a 12 foot dock on the north side of the ramp.

Bryan asked if it will be possible for the County to post a sign by his property line stating "anything past this point is private property." Whitfield said the County can place a sign by Bryan's property adjacent to the Garcon Point Boat Ramp with language as Bryan requested.

Kimbrough moved approval of the following changes at the Garcon Point Boat Ramp:

- (1) A 12 foot dock be placed on the north side of the ramp
- (2) A 40 foot dock be placed on the south side of the ramp
- (3) New signage be placed as stated

Harris seconded, and the motion carried by unanimous vote. (3-0)

Chairman Issues

None

Staff Updates

Whitfield said he has checked conditions at the Archie Glover Boat Ramp several times. He said there are two areas designated as no contractor parking. Whitfield said for some reason the contractor complies at one parking area but not the other. He said he went to the boat ramp this morning and saw one contractor vehicle parked in the parking area where they typically do not park. Whitfield said there was a note on the vehicle's windshield from Tidewater Skanska, Inc. (Interstate 10 Bridge contractor) stating if the vehicle was parked in this parking area again the vehicle will be towed. He said he emailed the bridge contractor asking this same notice be placed on contractor vehicles parking in either area designated as no contractor vehicle parking. Whitfield said he has not received a response. He said he has not heard any complaints lately from boaters parking at this boat ramp.

Harris asked if there have been any complaints concerning contractors' boats using both of the Archie Glover boat ramps. Whitfield said the contractors are only supposed to be using the west ramp. He said he has not received any complaints recently concerning contractors using the east ramp at this location. Whitfield said he felt the contractor's management is doing a good job keeping the east boat ramp open for boaters. He said in the email he sent to the contractor he asked for an estimated date of bridge completion and removal of equipment from the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Whitfield said he has not received a response. Harris said Santa Rosa County citizens need to be patient with the workers at Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said the workers on the bridge are doing a necessary job.

Waterway Access Funding Alternatives

Marker said it might be bad timing to consider any type of waterway access funding because of budget cuts. He said he has not received any opposition to boat ramp fees when mentioned to people. Marker said he looked into implementing boat ramp user fees and the cost associated with this proposal. He said he is not sure the Marine Advisory Committee should continue with the proposal at this time.

Harris said he recently paid \$10.00 to launch at a fishing tournament in Destin. He discussed the boat fee system in Destin. Harris said he felt the proposed boat ramp user fee can eventually become a good revenue source for the County. He said it will be worth it if a system can be implemented requiring all boats to have a sticker allowing use of Santa Rosa County boat ramps. Harris said he felt Santa Rosa County citizens should be required to get a sticker and anyone outside the County who wants to use County boat ramps can pay a fee through use of iron guardian boxes at the boat ramps. He said he is not sure how an iron guardian fee collection system will work, but this needs to be implemented and enforced.

Marker said he is in favor of boat ramp user fees, but he is concerned with the cost and legal issues associated with this proposal. Walker said there are specific requirements for being able to assess boat fees. He said he will research the legal issues of boat ramp user fees. There was discussion on what type of sticker can be used and where the sticker should be placed. Marker said boat ramp users need to either buy a sticker or pay a fee via iron guardian boxes. He discussed possible fees that can be charged for boat ramp use. Marker said limited parking at Santa Rosa County boat ramps will limit revenue generated by boat ramp user fees. He said he is willing to keep working on this proposal if the committee feels it is feasible. Marker said he felt boaters will pay to use County boat ramps if fees collected are used to improve waterway access. He said he spoke with the Sheriff, and the Sheriff did not seem to have any issues with enforcement of boat ramp user fees. Marker said the Marine Advisory Committee needs to determine if this proposal will generate enough funds to make it worth the effort.

Harris said he felt it is worth the effort of implementing boat ramp user fees if all boats are included. He said guardian boxes should only be placed at the larger boat ramps that have a significant amount of boater use.

Marker asked if staff found out if the State has any issues with the County charging boat ramp user fees at Navarre Beach. Blaylock said he has not received information back concerning this legal issue.

Kimbrough said he has concerns with this proposal. He said there are a lot of senior citizens on fixed incomes that fish almost every day. Kimbrough said he felt most senior citizens will not mind paying boat ramp user fees if the fee is small and everyone using the ramp areas is required to pay. He said he is not against boat ramp user fees, but he felt some older citizens might complain.

Marker said there will need to be an advertised public hearing to discuss the boat ramp user fee if the Marine Advisory Committee comes to a consensus on this issue. He said a sticker can be purchased by senior citizens that like to fish every day at a fair cost set by the Marine Advisory Committee. Harris said everyone who owns a boat should be required to pay to use boat ramps in the County. He said even people on fixed incomes can afford to pay a small annual fee. There was discussion on the amount of funds possibly generated by boat ramp user fees.

Walker asked for the proposal being requested by the Marine Advisory Committee. Marker said the committee is requesting implementation of a sticker system for boat ramp user fees. He said the fee for the boat ramp stickers will be determined after the County's cost for implementing this system is determined. Marker said the committee needs to know how many boaters there are in Santa Rosa County and the amount of funds possibly generated by boaters purchasing the stickers. He said it needs to be determined if iron guardians at specific County boat ramps will generate enough funds to implement. Marker said the committee also needs to be informed on the legality of boat ramp fees at Navarre Beach. He said he felt Navarre Beach boat ramp fees would be a major source of income for the County. Marker said he will email the exact proposal to County staff.

Marker said the committee needs to determine the percentage of generated funds to be used for certain things. Harris said he felt 50% should go toward acquisition of land and 50% should go toward maintenance of the boat ramps. He said he felt the sticker price can be set low enough to avoid opposition from citizens. Walker said there are approximately 16,000 boats in Santa Rosa County. He said about \$80,000.00 can be generated if all boats participate in this boat ramp user sticker system. Walker said he will have to check on the legality of the proposed sticker system. He said he is not sure how the iron guardian system will be policed.

Kimbrough discussed fishermen coming from other states. He said the committee needs to discuss this proposal further. Harris said the majority of out of state tourist who freshwater fish launch at private boat launches and the majority of out of state tourist who saltwater fish launch at the larger County boat ramps. Harris said he is not sure how to 5 police out of state boaters using County boat ramps. Kimbrough asked if a permit fee to launch from County boat ramps can be charged. There was discussion on adding fees to fishing licenses.

Kimbrough said he does not want to penalize Santa Rosa County citizens by requiring them to pay to launch at County boat ramps and letting out of state tourists launch at

County boat ramps for free. Marker said iron guardians can be used for out of state tourists to pay to use County boat ramps. Harris asked if it is possible to add a section to fishing license applications for out of state boaters informing them there is a boat ramp user fee required to use Santa Rosa County boat ramps. Walker said staff can find out if this extra fee can be legally added to out of state fishing licenses.

Harris said Marine Advisory Committee members need to talk to the public about boat ramp user fees to see how citizens feel about this issue. Marker said he has not heard any negative responses from the people he has discussed the fees with. He said people are receptive to boat ramp user fees if the fees will benefit County boaters.

Harris said citizens are aware of the County's budget problems. He said things like boat ramps are going to have to be put on the back burner because of budget cuts. Harris said he felt boaters are willing to pay a little more money if boating amenities are improved in the County. He said if enough funds are generated to improve a County boat ramp or purchase waterway access land, the improvements need to be done immediately so the boaters see their money being used for their benefit.

Marker said the County might have to dredge boat ramp areas if boat ramps are improved to the point that usage increases. He asked if dredging of boat ramp areas is possible. Blaylock said dredging might be a problem. There was discussion on dredging boating areas.

Marker said he will draft an email to staff regarding alternative access acquisition funding proposals discussed tonight that staff needs to address.

Other Issues

Marker said something needs to be done to provide access to the area closed off at the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He said the County needs to address this problem to allow boaters access in the wintertime. Harris said the work on the Interstate 10 Bridge is necessary, but it has caused problems with access in this area. He said the Archie Glover Boat Ramp area waterway needs to be widened.

Marker asked for direction from staff on how to proceed with getting this widening task accomplished. Blaylock said there is a permit that exists for the maintenance dredging previously done in the Archie Glover Boat Ramp area. Blaylock said the previous process can be repeated if the funds are available. He said the biggest challenge will be where to put the needed spoil site. Blaylock said he can help direct the committee on how to proceed to allow dredging of this area. Marker asked the approximate cost for this project. Blaylock said around \$300,000.00. Harris said he felt this area will not have to be dredged for a very long distance. He said the water is fairly deep once the channel is reached. Harris asked the amount of County owned property east of the Archie Glover launching ramp. Blaylock said the County does not own very much property east of the launching ramp. He said he will research the dredging issue.

Adjournment

Walker said there is a conflict with the next Marine Advisory Committee meeting on September 4th. He said a public budget meeting is scheduled for September 4, 2007 in the Board room. Marker asked if there is a conflict on September 11, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. Walker said he will check to see if the Board room is available on September 11th. He said he will notify committee members when he confirms the September 11th date is available.

Marker said the next Marine Advisory Committee meeting will be tentatively set for September 11, 2007 at 5:00 p.m., and Mr. Walker will send out confirmation to members.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.